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Our Earliest Printing-Press

BY ERNEST INGERSOLL

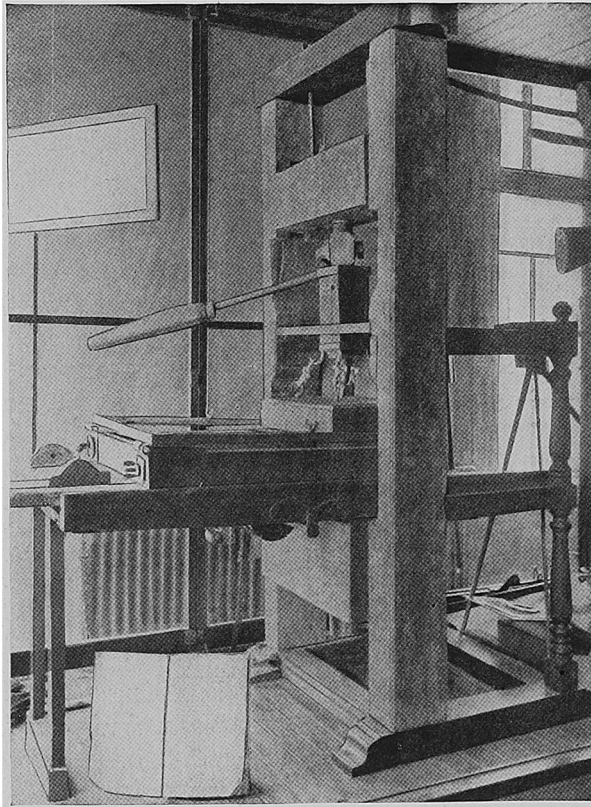
THAT the first printing-press used in the United States still exists—the press on which *The Freeman's Oath* and a part of *Indian Bible* were printed—is surely a matter of real interest. This venerable relic has at last found a fit resting-place in the Vermont Historical Society's Museum in the noble State House at Montpelier where it has been set up under glass, and is visible to the public.

Somewhat more than 280 years ago the Reverend Jesse (or Joseph?) Glover, an English Dissenting clergyman, was preparing to emigrate to New England in whose purposes and fortunes he was greatly interested. He was especially anxious as to the foundation of education there; and foreseeing the necessity of some means of printing and publishing knowledge in the Colonies, he set himself to supply the need by procuring and taking with him to Massachusetts the outfit of a small printing-office. Probably he announced his purpose to place this at the disposal of Harvard College, for he received help in his enterprise from religious friends in Holland and England. The fonts of type, in-

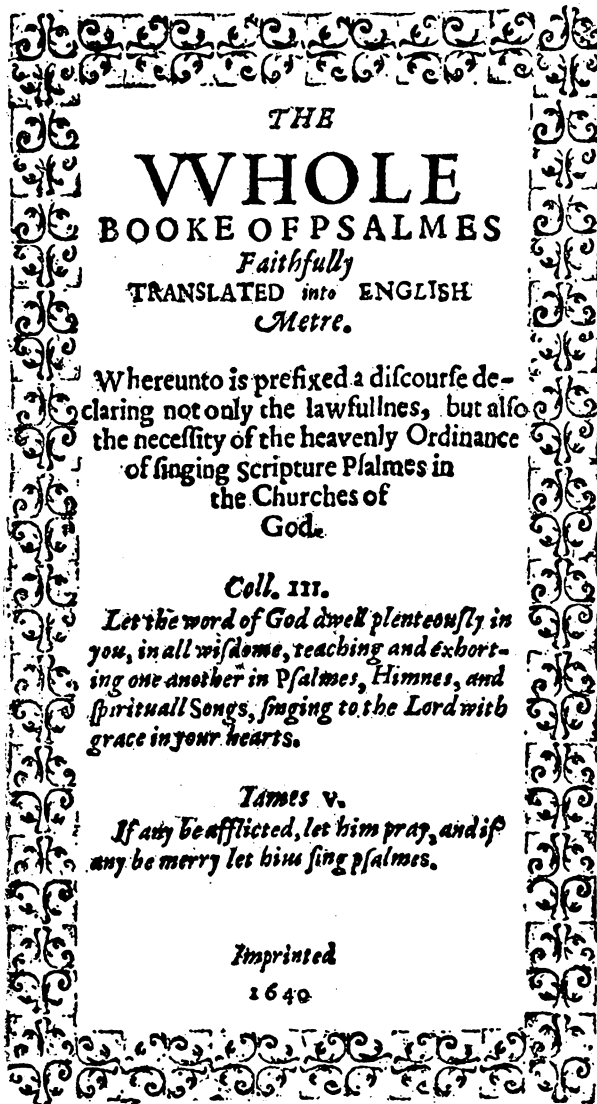
deed, seem to have been direct gifts to the college, but apparently the press itself remained Glover's personal property.

By whom or where the press was built is not known; but its maker followed the Ramage hand-lever model. As the clergyman was not himself a practical printer, he engaged to accompany him to America a young man named Stephen Daye, who was supposed to possess the necessary qualifications, but proved inefficient. Little is known of his antecedents, but it is probable that he was a scion of a family of printers named Daye (or Day) prominent in London at that period, which adopted as their trade-mark an elaborate device bearing the pictured motto "Arise, for it is Day." If so, he had little or no training in the art of printing; and one statement is that he had been a locksmith.

Mr. Glover left England for Boston early in 1638, with his family and his assistant Daye, taking with him the new press and an office equipment. Unfortunately however, the good man did not live to reach the shore to which he had looked forward so eagerly, but died at sea.



Courtesy Vermont Historical Society
THE FIRST PRINTING-PRESS USED IN COLONIAL AMERICA (1639), THE PRESS OF STEPHEN DAYE, NOW PRESERVED IN THE MUSEUM OF THE VERMONT HISTORICAL SOCIETY IN THE STATE HOUSE AT MONTPELIER



TITLE-PAGE OF THE "BAYE PSALME BOOK", THE
THIRD WORK PRINTED BY STEPHEN DAYE AT CAM-
BRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

When Mrs. Glover landed she speedily settled herself in Cambridge, where Harvard College was just getting fairly at work; and there the press was set up in the house of Henry Dunster, President of the young college, and an office opened for business under the hands of young Daye.

The first work was a "job" that would have pleased the benevolent minister by whose efforts it was possible—the printing of *The Freeman's Oath*, which appeared in January, 1639; and it is a line of poetry in the prosy page of Colonial history that this should be the first

thing printed from types in this "land of liberty." The second product was a locally calculated *Almanack*, and the third (1640) the *Baye Psalme Book*, now so rare and precious among bibliophiles. The printing of all these was extremely crude, and other work followed far better in purpose than in typography, for Daye's incompetence was soon manifest. In fact, although Daye remained in employment for several years, the real printer came to be Dunster himself, who, two years after Mrs. Glover's arrival, married that lady and took possession of her property. Doubtless by his influence, a law was enacted by the General Court that no printing should be done except in Cambridge, which practically gave a monopoly to the college is not to Dunster personally. Thus was founded the University Press, as it is now known—the oldest establishment of its kind in the United States.

One might spend an interesting hour over the publications of this press during its years of clanging work in Cambridge. Thirteen books in all are supposed to have been printed during Daye's time; but at the end of ten years he quit, or perhaps was forced out, for he at once began an action at law to recover £100 that he considered due him for unrequited services to the public. He failed to win his case, and died in 1668.

His place was filled in 1649 by a young man named Samuel Green, who, as a boy, had come over with Governor Winthrop, and had since made his way as best he could. It is not believed that he had had any special training as a printer, but somehow he acquired sufficient skill to enable him to retain for fifty years the management of the growing College Press, which long before had been moved from President Dunster's house to the brick building that had been erected to house that fruitless experiment, the Indian College. Green became an influential man in the Colony, and was the father of nineteen children; most of his boys became printers, and trained their descendants to the same trade, so that

previous to the Revolution Boston was never without a printer of this family.

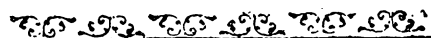
The College Press devoted its energies, beyond its duty to issue the Colonial laws and proclamations, to religious literature; and toward the end of its second decade printed a "Chatechisme" in the local Indian language made by an enthusiastic missionary at Natick, John Eliot. He had already been at work on a translation of the whole Scriptures into the Natick dialect, and had printed some parts, and at length was able to secure the aid of the British Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, which, in 1659 or 1660, sent over from London a new printing-press and a quantity of book paper, and also sent an experienced pressman named Marmaduke Johnson. He was the first capable workman to appear in the Colony, but turned out to be one of those careless, dissolute characters so common among the journeyman-printers of that day, and grieved the good citizens not a little.

This new outfit, brought by the disreputable but skillful Johnson, was added to the Cambridge printing-office under Mr. Green's care, and its first service was the making of Eliot's Indian Bible, on the title-page of which appears the legend "Printed to Samuel Green and Marmaduke Johnson." The correspondence and accounts rendered in the course of this elaborate work show that to hasten matters both presses were used, especially in making the New Testament, so that parts, at least, of Eliot's Bible were printed on the venerable relic whose history I am tracing—reason enough by itself for regarding it with high respect.

Many other serious works were issued subsequently, and the office increased as the country grew in numbers and wealth, especially as for a long time its legal monopoly was retained. On the death of Samuel Green in 1702, the College Press passed for a time into the hands of a son, Bartholomew Green. Presently, however, the College sold the office and all its materials. Bartholo-

PSALME xli, xlii.

mee thee before for aye.
 23 Bleft hath Ichovah Israels God
 from everlasting been,
 also unto everlasting;
 Amen, yea and Amen.



THE

SECOND BOOKE.

PSALME 42

To the chief musician, Maschil, for the
 Sonnes of Korah.

Like as the Hart panting doth bray
 after the water brooks,
 even in such wise o God, my soule,
 after thee panting looks.

2 For God, even for the living God,
 my soule it thirsteth fore:
 oh when shall I come & appeare,
 the face of God before.

3 My reares have been unto mee meat.
 by night also by day,
 while all the day they unto mee
 where is thy God doe say.

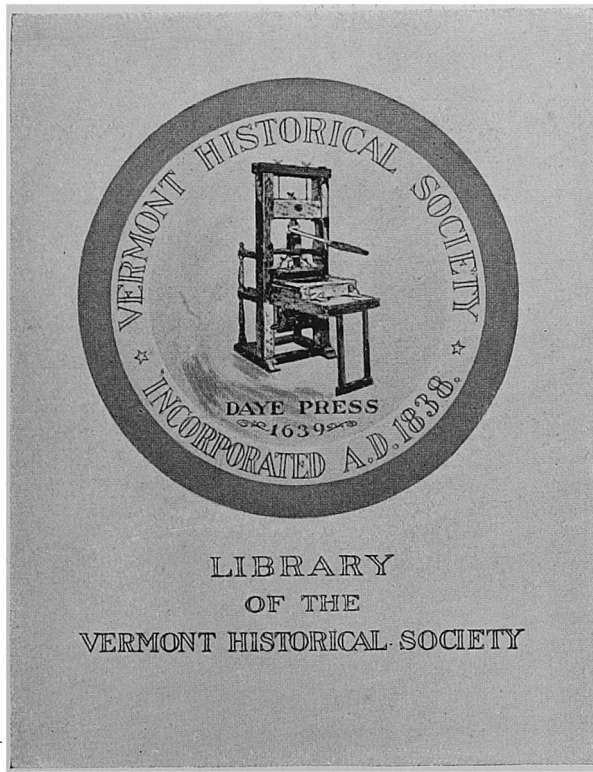
4 When as I doe in minde record
 these things, then me upon
 I doe my soule out poure, for I
 with multitude had gone:
 With them unto Gods house I went,
 with voyce of joy & prayse:

I with

PAGE FROM STEPHEN DAYE'S EDITION OF THE "BOOK
 OF PSALMS", CALLED THE "BAYE PSALME BOOK"
 PRINTED IN 1640

mew Green may have been the buyer, for he at once opened a shop in Boston, where he became "the most distinguished printer of that period in this country," and remained so for nearly forty years, and it was he who at first printed, and later owned the Boston *News-Letter*, the first newspaper printed in the British colonies.

Whether a part of the furniture of this office was the old Glover press, or whether it was purchased directly from the College, is not known; but at any rate Timothy Green, a nephew of Bartholomew, and grandson of Samuel Green,



Courtesy Vermont Historical Society

BOOK-PLATE OF THE VERMONT HISTORICAL SOCIETY, ILLUSTRATING THE PRESS USED BY STEPHEN DAYE IN PRINTING "THE FREEMAN'S OATH" AT CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, JANUARY, 1639

1st, also opened a printing-office "at the north part of the town in Boston," and there the ancient press was domiciled until 1714, when its owner became printer to the Colony of Connecticut, at a salary of £50 a year, and took the press with him to New London.

By 1752 he had grown old and weary, and induced his son, Timothy, 2nd, already in business in Boston, to come to New London and take charge of his affairs. Among his apprentices, somewhat later, was a nephew also named Timothy (3rd), who succeeded to his uncle's business after his death in 1763. One of his uncle's enterprises had been a small weekly newspaper styled *The Summary*. Timothy 3rd, discontinued this, but very soon began another, doubtless printed on this press, called *The New London Gazette*, which had a long life.

He had in his office during these years an apprentice named Judah Paddock

Spooner, who after a while married the sister of his master. In 1773 Spooner was taken into partnership, and Green and he together moved the office to Norwich, Conn., where they remained five years, publishing Paine's *Common Sense*, a manual of military tactics, an edition of Watt's *Psalms*, and other books, the most celebrated of which, perhaps, is the *Dialogue Concerning the Slavery of the Africans*, by Dr. Hopkins, which advocated the doctrine of immediate emancipation. For all this Green furnished the machinery, which included our historic press.

In 1778 the outfit was taken to Hanover, New Hampshire, thence to Westminster, Vermont, where, on February 12, it was used in the first printing of the *Green Mountain Post Boy*, the first newspaper issued in Vermont. By this time Green had withdrawn, and the old press became a part of the equipment of his partner, Judah P. Spooner, who then formed with his brother, Alden Spooner, a firm that became the first State printers, and settled at Windsor, Vermont.

In 1814, according to Mr. Henry S. Dana's investigations recorded in *The Vermont Standard* (of Woodstock), the old press was sold to Isaac Eddy of Weathersfield, and thence passed through the hands of David Watson and A. D. Alleyne of Woodstock. A Mr. Merrifield, of Windsor, saw it about to be sold in 1833 as junk, and bought it. A few years later L. O. Greene, editor of *The Vermont Standard*, discovered it in Merrifield's barn; and its next and final journey was to Montpelier, where it was committed to the preservative care of the Historical Society.

It would be difficult to find in the whole country a relic more worthy of patriotic attention, or one more suggestive of the development of those ideas and institutions of liberty of thought and of speech that have held to the glory and grandeur of our country, and have irradiated the world in the nobility of their influence. This relic is one which American bibliophiles will hold sacred.